DISCOVERIES AT NINEVEH.

Death of Hormuzd Rassam Recalls His Famous Suit Against Budge.

To the Editor of The New York Times:

The recent death of Hormuzd Rassam recalls some interesting circumstances.

In 1893 Mr. Rassam (in Queen's Bench, Rassam vs. Budge) sued Dr. Budge, the Curator of the Department of Oriental Antiquities in the British Museum, for slander and libel, in saying and writing that he, (Rassam,) while in charge of the excavations at Aboo-Habba, had permitted his relatives to carry away and dispose of the best finds for their own advantage and had only sent "rubbish" to the British Museum, which employed him. These charges Dr. Budge had made to Sir Henry Layard, M. Renouf, and Dr. Pinches, all of whom testified at the trial that Budge had made them. They had also been made in writing to the Trustees of the museum.

Before bringing suit Mr. Rassam showed the Trustees that he had had no relatives at Aboo-Habba, or within several hundred miles of it; that he had not permitted any antiquities to be carried away, and that he had not sent "rubbish" to the museum. Whereupon Dr. Budge wrote him what he (Budge) considered and asserted was a retraction and "full apology," but which the court characterized as "insincere, ungentlemanly, and shabby." Upon receiving this unsatisfactory retraction Mr. Rassam took his grievance to the High Court of Justice, where he was overwhelmingly supported by the evidence, firmly upheld by Mr. Justice Cave, and, contrary to every expectation, denied justice by the jury, who rendered a verdict for defendant.

Mr. Rassam was a very sensitive man, then nearly 70 years of age, and this miscarriage of justice nearly broke his heart. Despairing, on account of his foreign birth, (he was a Chaldean,) of ever obtaining justice from a British jury, he confided his papers to me and begged that when he had passed away beyond the sphere of calumny and injustice I would relate his story to the world. He was a sincere Christian, honest, frank, and communicative, but of a shy, timid, and retiring disposition, ready to yield to almost any domination.

His story commences in 1845, when he conducted those excavations at Nineveh which have rendered the name of Layard famous; for it was Rassam and not Layard who made the discoveries, Rassam who could read cuneiform, Rassam who could converse with the natives in Chaldee or Arabic, and not Layard, who understood only English and French, neither of which was of the slightest use in Mesopotamia, and who therefore could do nothing but look on while Rassam worked. The latter declared one day to me in the British Museum that the name of Layard on the great human-headed bulls and on other Assyrian monuments should in truth be erased and his own substituted, "for it was I," said he, "who sought for these antiquities, I who found them, and I who sent them to the museum, not Layard." He also told me of the bargeload of cuneiform tablets which Layard sank, or permitted to be sunk, in the Tigris, leaving me to guess at the reason for it. When I hazarded a conjecture he would neither confirm nor contradict it. "Sir Henry," said he, "has always been kind to me, and I can say nothing to his disadvantage." This was just about the time when he was bringing suit against Dr. Budge. His story of what was done, and what was not done but should have been done, at Nineveh, Kouyunjik, and Aboo-Habba, would fill a volume, but a volume that I fear will never be written, for nobody would believe it, and what's the use?

ALEXANDER DEL MAR.

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